

64

THE BOTTLE AND THE BUSHMAN

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
PREFACE	ii
YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN	1
NERO FUMO	2
CALIBAN	4
MANHOOD MORNING	6
EROS TYRANNOUS	8
SHOES	9
THE INFIDEL	10
WHITE MAN'S GOD	12
A SHORT LESSON IN COMPARATIVE LANGUAGES	13
LOVE I LAUGH	15
THE BOTTLE AND THE BUSHMAN	18
WHITE MAN NO FOOL	19
A LETTER TO HARLEM	20
FOR LOUISE	21
THE BOTTLE IS MY SHEPHERD	22
MALCOLM X AND BILLY GRAHAM	23
GOING HOME	24
HOME	25
THE RETURN OF THE BUSHMAN	26
DELILAH	28
3-IN-1	30
BECAUSE I AM CIVILIZED NOW	32

CONTENTS (cont'd)

SILLY SENSELESS BIRDS	33
HANGOVER SHADOW	34
MURDER IN THE BEDROOM	35
WAITING FOR GOD	37
DRUNKEN SISYPHUS	38
THE BLACK TIN GOD	39
DIRGE	41
WHEN I CONSIDERED	42
IN UHURU LAND	43
IN MONEY WE TRUST	46
EXILE I	49
EXILE II	50
THE LANDLADY	52
FAREWELL, SYLVIA	54
GOD IS A STONE	55
TIME	56
BLACK MAN'S BURDEN	57
LILITH	60
MALCOLM X	61
TO YOUR ENEMY, GIVE SWEET MILK	65
AT THE UNITED NATIONS	67
BUSHMAN'S MUSE	68
SHAKESPEARE, THE BIBLE & BUSHMAN ON WINE	69

CONTENTS (cont'd)

CARFAYE	70
AFWEYNE AND TOGANE.	72
BYE-BYE SIR JOHN BARLEYCORN	74
IN PRAISE OF LOVE AND LOOL.	78
BUSHMAN, PICK UP THY PEN.	79

ABSTRACT

THE BOTTLE AND THE BUSHMAN

Mohamud Siad Togane

These fifty poems chronicle the obsessions of a drunken Somali bushman - chaser of the merciless mirage called civilization - as he hobble-wobbles in Italian shoes which clamp, cut, and incarcerate his indigenous feet. They depict him in his borrowed clothes. He is in an unenviable position: he is neither of the bush nor of the West. He is a bastard of Western civilization for it is impossible for Caliban to become Prospero. He is a naked black infidel of that lost and lonely African tribe which is comforted neither by Juju, nor Jesus, nor Allah, nor any genies.

PREFACE

The first thing an African bushman who was thirsty for white civilization did when he encountered the colonizer was to learn his language and ape his manners. He became the white man's interpreter-- the interpreter of the oracle. He carried the master's orders and wishes to the other natives in whose eyes the bushman now became a demigod. They deified him because he spoke just like the Bwana. After Uhuru (freedom) the bushman assumed the colonizer's power and position.

In 1960, Somalia achieved independence from Britain and Italy. With independence appeared the phenomenon of the Anglicized, Frenchified, Italianated, and alienated bushman whose offspring were being educated in Italian, English, French, Arabic, and Russian. One spoke a foreign language to be considered educated and civilized. Until 1972, Somali was not a written language; it was "a bush language." This prompted Ali Sugule, a Somali poet, to compose a satiric poem entitled: Does Civilization Mean Speaking the Language of an Alien Tribe?

The poems depict the "civilized" Somali bushman in his borrowed clothes. He is in an unenviable position: he is neither of the bush nor of the West. He is a bastard of Western civilization for it is impossible

for Caliban to become Prospero. He is a naked black infidel of that lost and lonely African tribe which is comforted neither by Juju, nor Jesus, nor Allah, nor any genies.

Today in much of Africa the educated bushman's power and prestige have been either compromised or usurped by another type of a bushman-- less educated and very dangerous-- the bushman with a gun who leads an army not to fight other armies but to loot and terrorize civilian populations.

The poems are informed by this perspective.

1.

YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN

When I was born,
before my mother could suckle me,
I choked on the holy water of the Zam-Zam well &
the creed of Islam was intoned into my ears.

I was Queequeg and Friday
before I encountered Stanley and Livingstone.
I bought the best their world peddled:
the Bible and the bottle.
Possessed with the spirits of both
I grew weary and cursed both.

Back to the ancestral cave and cannibalism;
back to the jungle and mumbo jumbo I'd fain go home.

NERO FUMO

1

In my black world
there was no white boy
whose straight hair I wanted
to stroke to brand me nigger.

2

Though I was teased
I was above suspicion:
my button nose and good hair
testified to my Somaliness.

3

They were black like us
because rats could crawl through their
large-holed nostrils,
because their corn-on-the-cob hair
looked like a bunch of flies
lost in fornication
we clawed them with our contempt-
"Niggers!"

4
I ran into the prodigious buttocks of a Somali woman.

"Nigger! Nero fumo!" she fumed

without bothering to check

my button nose and good hair.

Out of her buttocks I gasped,

"tuo vagino sono nero fumo."

CALIBAN

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse

Caliban in The Tempest

Miss Gehman, the Mennonite missionary teacher, meowed:

H O W O L D A R E Y O U ?

When I mimicked what Bushman ears heard:

X A A U R A A Y O : what stinks? (in Abgaal dialect)

I shrivelled in the shaming laughter of the class.

But now

right

white

through the nose I babble pray & bray

for I am mad

bad

cad

dad

fad

gad

had

lad

pad

rad

sad

tad

yad

bat
cat
fat
hat
kat
mat
nat
pat
sat
tat
vat
wat?

FUCKINO BASTAR BILAADI FOOL!

MANHOOD MORNING

1

Like a coward I peed
that manhood morning
too many times
before the sheikh appeared.

2

Out of the watchful crowd
Jama (who had his turn last rainy season when he became
a man)
pointed
to the equally watchful vultures
hovering above:

"I am going to throw the foreskin of your one-eyed snake
to them!"

3

I sat on a stool
in the courtyard
facing the sheikh
legs apart
steeled
not to wail like a woman.

7

"In the name of Allah,
the merciful and the compassionate..."
the sheikh intoned pulling
bringing down
a blinding blade.
Leaping back
I overturned the stool
half-circumcised
half infidel
half man.

4

I waddled away
from the hissing crowd
bleating like one of the goats
slaughtered for the occasion:
"MAAA-MEEEE!
please, pour water on it!"

EROS TYRANNOUS

. . . if two lie together, then they have heat:
but how can one be warm alone?

(Ecclesiastes 4:11)

Driven from a cold lonesome bed
by imperious lust
fuelled by liquor
I scour St.Denis & Crescent streets
where whores and houris huddle.

I flit ogling
 warm
 white
 lucent
 million-pleasured
 ripe
 quivering tits.

SHOES

My first pair of shoes
were Italian
brown pungent
pointed as stiletto
cost more than
monthly maintenance of Somali mistress
but gave no relief:

they pinched
they cut
they incarcerated
indigenous bushman's feet.

Heedlessly I hobble
wobbled

a street arab once
sheikh of the Indian Ocean
who bullied Indians and other assorted infidels and
stole the shoes of the faithful at prayer.
Now I stagger through white civilization
like a camel in a Fata Morgana.

THE INFIDEL

1

Every morning
on my way to school
ears still warm
with the Imam's
A-A-A-A-M-I-I-I-N
I scalded Mario
with my eyes:
pumpkin-bellied
infidel
red-eyed like a cannibal
seated
solemnly
sullenly
before a raging
piss-coloured
frothing drinkfried

2

The erstwhile school-boy
without his shining

morning Muslim face
fettered by fate
to Mario's uncircumcised bitchwitch
amongst a flock of drunkards
ears sodden sinsaddled
faithless
fallen
fatforgetful.

WHITE MAN'S GOD

White man showed me a picture of his god:

LOOKED just like himself:

pale skin

blond hair

Billy Graham fire blue eyes

bullying

pleading

"Would you be white

whiter

much whiter than snow?

There's power

power

wonder-working power

in the precious blood of the Lamb."

"No. Thank you!

BWANA, I am proud to own: everybody in the village know
my name.

Call me DHU-HU-LOW

'cause I am as black as CHARCOAL!"

A SHORT LESSON IN COMPARATIVE LANGUAGES

1

Bushman come from Somalia
 he is a donkey thinking hisself a horse.
Somalia mean milk the camels,
 Bushman now drink piss milked by Molson.

2

In bushman language &
 in Englishman language
 a nag is a nag
 a yahoo is a yahoo.
 General Jaruzelski is a yahoo.
 General Afweyne is a yahoo.
 Bushman believe cowboy Reagan biggest yahoo.

3

In The Naked and the Dead

Mailer wrote fug
 bushman word for fuck
 'cause in America
 fuck is a nigger word
 'n America scared of fuck

fucking niggers too.

4

In Englishman language

a goose is a goose,

in bushman language

by his goose

you know a man is a man

'n a seal is the stamp between Juliet's quivering thighs.

Bushman prefer fat women 'cause they all seal.

5

Bushman shed laughing tears

when Miss Gehman, the missionary teacher, declared

"In the British parliament

a bill does not become law

unless and until

Her Majesty, The Queen, puts her seal on it."

LOVE I LAUGH

1

Love I laugh
unlike you
I do not bluff:
shall I disrobe?
sport?
betray?
duel?
or die?

2

You are unjust and cowardly
blind both to need and merit.
How many brave hearts have you hacked?
Bondheri put away his spear
prayed and fasted in your name.
The blow you dealt
hurt him into poetry
tickling death's ear.

3

Drunk
in Montreal
in a deep ditch
straddled by loneliness
a quivering thigh
jello buttocks
dangle
before my hungry
bushman's eyes.
"Penelope, where are you?"

4

Last night
naked
sliding
slipping
slithering
sluing
slurping
slobbering
smacking
smiting
smiling

squeezing

squishing

squirting

sluicing

I sank into her mossy well and
outsnoored The Seven Sleepers.

THE BOTTLE AND THE BUSHMAN

The bottle is the gateway to white civilization:

I emptied it and became civilized.

I reeled and met Mailer

who mesmerized me with his message:

drinking is the business of the spiritual man.

I was accosted by civilized

Wolfe singing hymns to the bottle:

"Proud, magic liquor."

I washed down the warning of the bushman.

Don't take a strong drink! Wine mocks man:

it can make him mistake his mother for his wife.

Wait till you get to paradise

where there are no mothers

where you become as potent as twenty Othellos and

enjoy wild houris in rivers of whisky.

I hobbled on, discoursing fustian

with my shadow.

Nobody loves or pities

A drunken bushman.

WHITE MAN NO FOOL

White man no fool:

pacified the village preaching

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

Meantime

took away the best land

built hisself a white house on a hill cannot be hid

only stone house

only indoor plumbing

only electric lights

only warm place to shit

wipes his red dainty blessed ass with goose-down-soft
perfumed paper.

way
down
the
hill

blackie poops in bushes

wipes his black meek ass with earth sand stones sticks
leaves

pieces of broken bottle shards

singing

"TAKE THE WHOLE WORLD, BUT GIMME JESUS!"

A LETTER TO HARLEM

Dear black brother and sisters in Harlem:

I am no savage.

I don't swing from trees like a monkey.

I am not afraid of Tarzan like whitey show you on TV.

I don't eat missionaries, nor chitlins.

I wear a bush 'cause I am a bushman.

I heard you used to burn Africa out of your hair
till Brother Malcolm X made you hip.

Whitey tells me I am superior to you

'cause I am exotic

'cause I am from Africa

'cause I speak Swahili

'cause I've a country

'cause my name is SHOKOLOKUBANGASHAYA.

But I don't believe him. I believe you superior

you stronger

you have to be

to live with him

to survive him & his lies.

Your brother in Africa

FOR LOUISE

1

Four years ago
outside your house
outside the city
I shook the dust off my feet:
our breaths became strangers
and the city knotted me daily
startling me with what I lost.

2

My beloved opens to me again
I will rise now
and go back to her city
on a pilgrimage
for the piece that passes all understanding.

THE BOTTLE IS MY SHEPHERD

The bottle is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

She maketh me to lie down in gutters:

She leadeth me to every bar, party, & whore.

She ruineth my soul:

She leadeth me in the paths of unrighteousness
for her name's sake.

Yea, though I stagger through the valley of the shadow
of death,

I will feel nothing: for thou art with me; drunkenness
and oblivion

they comfort me.

Thou holdest me tight in the presence of mine enemies: thou

fillest my head with stupor; my cup runneth over with piss.

Surely booze & blackouts shall dog me all the days of my
life:

and I will dwell in the house of John Barleycorn forever.

MALCOLM X AND BILLY GRAHAM

Jesus saves!

Jesus saves!

Honky Jesus saves honkies.

Cracker Jesus saves Crackers.

Honky cracker Jesus hexed

Tom Knee-grow into singing

"Wash me and I will be whiter than snow."

"Just you wait and see," someone wiser said.

"Old Tom Knee-grow is gonna wake up one of these days
and find hisself as black as ever."

Malcolm X came and busted Billy Graham honky cracker Jesus
upside the head

delivering Tom Knee-grow from the hex of the honky.

GOING HOME

I am going home
home to Somalia
where the sun shines
where the land is free
only for the General:
teach me
to live in his shadow
to call Abba, father of knowledge and wisdom
whom I used to call Afweyne: Mighty Mouth
to submit to tyranny
to flatter
to bow and scrape
to mimic like a chameleon
and
to pluck out one of my eyes
among my one-eyed people.

HOME

Welcome!

Welcome home.

Welcome to Somali Democratic Republic.

When you leaving?

When you going go back to . . .

wherever you coming from?

Meantime

to survive:

sing hosanna to General Afweyne

seal your mouth

or sink into black Gehenna.

THE RETURN OF THE BUSHMAN

Among the hunger-pinched Somalis
I stand out like the red behind of a baboon,
I, the second ~~fattest~~ man in the city of Mogadishu,
fatter even than Mighty Mouth,
the hyena who swallowed the whole country.
Like them I was once
a skeleton keen on kosher
before I made a prodigal journey to U.S.A.
before I pilgrimaged to Babylon
where my maw gobbling

hot dogs

hamburgers

hams

"pigs in the blanket"

pigs' feet

bloodwursts

smoked butts

chitlings

balls of hogs

frog legs

oysters

cotton wool bread

shoo-fly pies

banana splits

washed down with oceans of

beer

wine

cutty sark

bloody marys

high balls

martinis

manhattans

moscow mules

became a prostitute.

DELILAH

1

You pursued me

landed me

peeled me

sucked me

topped me

pushpushed me

mortared me

fugged me

stoked me

fired me

watered me

until sleep escorted me out of you

2

For friendship friends voyaged in vain

pleading

against love

against lust

against niggerlike thirdleg reasoning

against deep ditches

against uncircumcised bitchwitches

against ploughing with a stray heifer of friendbrother.

against Delilah who drowned friendbrother
in a lie called liquor.

3-IN-1

The earth: a kind of vast spiritual
Kindergarten where millions of people are
trying to spell God with the wrong blocks.

E.A. Robinson

In the village of Mahadey Weyn
I heard an oily kaffir expatiate
on his three-headed god:
"I know for simple bush folks like you
the trinity is a tricky business.
On this Sabbath morning
I asked the Lord to help me keep it simple.
Here in my hand I hold
a common can of oil
found in every household
in the U.S.A.

It's ONE can called THREE-IN-ONE

B E C A U S E

three things it does:

It lubricates.

It cleans.

It polishes.

L I K E W I S E

the blessed trinity is three-in-one:

God the Father creates.

God the Son saves.

God the Holy Ghost sanctifies.

All glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

3-in-1

1-in-3

ever 3

ever 1

to thee, O Blessed Trinity, be praised
throughout eternity! Amen."

Last Sunday the kaffir's god was a lamb.

Now he is an oily mechanic like himself

but I still wonder

which god lubricates

which god cleans

which god polishes.

BECAUSE I AM CIVILIZED NOW

I forgot how humans smell.

My armpits and crotch don't get funky anymore.

Because I am deodorized now.

Women! What a conundrum!

But I do what's important:

I fornicate as regularly as I read the daily paper.

Because I am civilized now.

I feel desolate.

I've outgrown many myths which were once comfortable creeds
because I am civilized now.

I perform ablutions with booze and

prostrate towards Babylon

because I am civilized now.

SILLY SENSELESS BIRDS

Any black who would defend an African military dictatorship is as much a fascist as J. Edgar Hoover.

George Jackson

African military dictators
made Presidents for life
by the death of their opponents
far more putrid and painful than South Africa:
the white boil on the bottom of black Africa.
Silly senseless birds --
those legendary birds of Somalia
that once borrowed fire
only to burn down their own nests.

HANGOVER SHADOW

Chomping at the tyranny of General Afweyne

feeling homeless at home

from the bottle I sought succor and

sat down with kat-chewers.

The noise of Afweyne is heard in our land.

Power blares its boasts and brays on his side.

We have no comforter.

Every morning fear saddles us.

From the prison of the bottle

hear my lamentations!

Woe unto me

I am undone

I am no more!

The bottle swallowed me up.

I am swallowed up.

*Sonah ain't swallowed up!

I am the hangover shadow

holding the bottle

that swallowed the bushman up.

MURDER IN THE BEDROOM

Sex is not only a divine and beautiful activity: it's
a murderous activity. People kill each other in bed.
Some of the greatest crimes ever committed were
committed in bed. And no weapons were used.

Norman Mailer.

Off

you turned the lights

lit a candle

the wine was red

and gave its colour to the bed.

We grew mellow with the reefers

willing

naked

vulnerable

you stoked me

your sex drooled

it moved itself aright

ready to ram

my chief joy I preferred

above all the shikshas

my pestle dipped dripped davened

for your fat juicy Jewish kosher cunt

suddenly

coldly

maliciously

murderously

you turned your back

pretended sleep

bleeding my desire to death.

WAITING FOR GOD

Waiting Waiting Waiting

the people resigned themselves to waiting:

". . . that day and that hour knoweth no man,
no, not the angels which are in heaven,
neither the Son, but the Father."

Waiting Waiting Waiting

the people wondered & wandered in their waiting.

"I am that I am."

Waiting Waiting Waiting

the people's buttocks grew sore and tired.

"I am a jealous God."

Waiting Waiting Waiting

the people yawned murmuration in their waiting:

"At least we heard it said

He has once appeared in a burning bush."

DRUNKEN SISYPHUS

I drink
because
I was drunk
to my daily rounds
of the bars
I stagger
murdering
cowardly ambition
and nagging memory.

THE BLACK TIN GOD

And he (. . . the South African writer) sees and understands
for the first time that, given equal opportunity, the black
tin God a few thousands miles north of him would degrade
and dehumanize his victim as capably as Vorster . . .

Wole Soyinka

It is astounding what outrages
a black bully with guns can perpetrate in
Africa.
He can exalt himself above God, Allah, and
Juju &
force a whole nation to worship him.
He can prove his baboonery and outbaboon
white colonialists and castrate a whole
nation
by plunging it into abject servility:
he can fancy himself a Napoleon and crown
himself Emperor;
he can style himself a teacher, a prophet,
a savior, a revolutionary
philosopher equal to Mao, Marx, and Lenin
and teach the nation ad nauseam;
he can seize the attention of the whole world
by personally beating up foreign journalists,
like Bokassa beat up Michael Goldsmith;
he can piss on Uhuru, embrace tribalism
and clanism and
call them Scientific Socialism;

he can loot the land and declare himself
PRESIDENT FOR LIFE;

he can appropriate any name, any land,
any title, any degree, any medal--

why he can even call himself

like General Mobutu did:

"THE PEPPERY ALL-CONQUERING WARRIOR,

THE COCK WHO LEAVES NO HEN INTACT."

And rape every chick in sight.

DIRGE

1

It is now the false dawn
Sleep has fled
our once happy sheets
colder than a shroud.
Where are you, love?

2

Outside
it is dark
it is dreary,
it is dreadful
and the rain is beating
beating a dirge
upon my window
upon my soul--
Where are you, love?

1

WHEN I CONSIDERED

When I considered
in lucid drunken anger
the freaks of Africa

I hollered: UHURU, a whore!

A shout shook me shuddering the shack bar:

Come back! Come back, white man! Come back to Africa!

EVERYTHING FORGIVEN!

"You out of your cotton picking head," Malcolm corrected.

"Booze-poison messing up your head, Bushman.

Whitey ain't never left Africa: he ain't even absent.

These uncle tom knee-grow African freaks fronting for him
minding the store.

Every shut eye ain't sleep,

Every good-bye ain't gone.

IN UHURU LAND

And you, traitors to your people,
Where will you run to
When the brave of the lands gather?
For Kenya is black people's country.

Ngugu Wa Thiong'o

A black man is not safe at home; a black man is
not safe abroad.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

1

I hid
in "stable" Kenya
in uhuru land
I hid
in front of a wicket
behind a white woman

I hid
behind my wife

I hid
from a black man

I hid

2

He looked at her passport

smiled
no visas necessary
open sesame
because
she from Canada.

3

As if
a mamba snake
were about to strike him
he recoiled
because
underneath her passport
hid
like me
my Somali passport.

4

"He is my husband"

Without hiding
his contempt
he opened it.

Before you could say

J. Robinson!

He closed it
clasped it to his heart

5

beamed

pocketed the single fifty (U.S.) dollar note

beamed again

bowed:

"Bon voyage!"

IN MONEY WE TRUST

Bushman, you wanna be civilized?

Go get money!

It don't matter how

get it honestly

if you can

get it dishonestly

if you must

but by all means

get money.

Bushman, put money in thy loincloth!

In God we trust

in money we must.

Money is defence:

money makes an hedge about you.

Money is the sixth sense

without which the other five are useless!

Bushmen without money you don't make no sense
period.

Without money you can't get

tight pussy

loose shoes

or warm place to shit.

Without money

rich man's shoes better than you.

Without money

you dirt

nigger dirt

without money

you really unhappy lonesome nigger

lonelier than Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane
before they crucified him.

Without money

you without pappa

without mamma

without descent--

you born orphan.

Money makes the oil of gladness shine on your face.

Money makes everything possible and permissible.

Blond blue-eyed pale-skinned Billy Graham Jee-sus
failed to make you white as snow

but money will make coal black nigger like you
white right

even in South Africa

where Japs are white because they got money.

where your kind are called kaffirs and sacrificed to
Mammon because they ain't got no money.

Money makes friends who make you laugh
who laugh with you and for you

but if you poor

you separated even

from yourself and from society.

Oh God! Don't make me poor

lest I steal and take your goddamn name in vain.

Brother, can you spare a dime?

Chinese Japanese money please.

I heard a brother in Harlem holler:

"Eenee. Meenie. Minee. Moe.

Catch that motherfucker honky by the throat

if he's got money, don't let him go!"

Bushman, I ain't interested in

how long you been in America

how many degrees you got

how many black oaks you split

how many blonds you balled

how many times you got drunk and stoned

out of your bushy head in Reggie's

I wanna know

how big your bank account?

Bushman, if you were born in a civilized country and

were properly toilet-trained instead of

pooping anywhere in the bush,

by now you'd have big bucks in the bank.

Bushman, if you have the gift of prophecy

and understand all mysteries

and all knowledge

and if you have all faith

so you could remove mountains-

but have no money, you ain't shit!

EXILE I

Now it is
the seventh season of sorrow
since I ran away
from home
from my kingdom by the sea
from Somalia
from Mighty Mouth's cruel laughter
like a latter-day slave
to Canada
to a land kinder than home
which I believed
belonged
to John F. Kennedy
when a Mennonite missionary
driven
from his fat farm
in Markham, Ontario
by "Go ye
therefore and preach the gospel
to every creature ..."
hounded me
in the benighted bush
for Heaven.

EXILE II

Oh, to be in Somalia
now that it is
that time of year
here in Montreal
when the marrow freezes in my bones
when my ebon skin looks ashy white
dried for death
when alien ailments
blow in
from Hong Kong
Bangkok
and Oryx's asshole.
To be home in Mogadishu
where there is no
wet
white
cold
snow
falling
from the heavens
numbing everything below.
Home
where I'd dive
hidden

from the sun and
in the cool depths
of the Indian Ocean and
startle the flying stingrays.

THE LANDLADY (with apologies to Margaret Atwood)

1

This is the lair of the landlady
whose friendly phone voice
freed me not from funk;
"Are you Scottish by any chance?
You sound so Scottish."

2

Accompanied by ten of her
fish-belly-white tribesmen
I tried to blend into her mansion.

3

Lulled by her honeyed honkeydom
for a while I forgot
like my donkey
that often grazes with horses
forgets his donkeydom
that I looked like that Moor who loved
not wisely but too well.

4

She finally fished me out
and framed me with:
"God made the beast of the earth
after his kind,
and cattle after their kind,
and every thing that creepeth
upon the earth
after his kind:
why don't you go
and lair with your kind?"

FAREWELL, SYLVIA

The prophecy your husband spat on me
proved as inexorable as the will of Allah:
"Look to her, fool, if you have eyes to see.
she has deceived her husband, and may thee."

Your thrall
for a season
we rolled.

Farewell, Sylvia, for I startled myself
in the silent chambers of my heart
honing a dagger
unlike the one you oiled
unlike the one you sheathed many a night.

GOD IS A STONE

Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread,
will give him a stone?
Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

(Matthew 7:9-10)

I thought I heard a meow
but turning I saw
a beggar behind an outstretched hand.

Sneering at the god
in whose name he accosted me
I handed him a coin
letting my left hand know
what my right hand was doing.

God is a stone
an obsession I am trying to dissolve in drink.

TIME

1

With mermaids I came
riding on a wave
which mothered me into time.
In our turnings time
held me safe stroking my hair
dandling me on her knee
singing me a song far more
soothing than the sigh of the sea
never doubting her
embrace.

2

Time now hurries
past my hobbled self
stopping scornfully
only to plant in my beard
gray flowers of shame
reminding me of her grave
far more cruel
than the bottle and the bush.

BLACK MAN'S BURDEN

1

I cannot take a walk
in downtown Montreal
without a white naked need
accosting me.

On St. Denis Street
a white girl sashays to me:
"Brown sugar, can you lay some fine weed on me?
I ain't got the bread,
but I got pussy.
I wanna get high bad.
Brown sugar, you interested?"

2

On Sherbrooke and Durocher
an ofay puts his arm
around my shoulders:
"Hey, man!
where can I get laid?
I'm from out of town."

3

On my way home
on rue Napoleon
the same need
this time
drunk and dressed in French:
"Cherchez-moi une femme;
ma femme m'a laissé!"

4

At Chez Demos restaurant
the owner pulls me and my date
out of the tail of the line
past the staring
unbelieving
envious white folks
sits us down
at the best table
brings forth
food and wine
all on the house because he enjoyed
how I played
the saxophone
the night before
at the Rising Sun!

5

We ate and drank
with a vengeance.
If the fool
only knew:
the only instrument
I know how to play
is the jukebox.
I guess
there is no sense
telling white folks
I am neither a pusher
nor a pimp
nor another Louis Armstrong.

LILITH

It was Lilith, the wife of Adam . . .
Not a drop of her blood was human,
But she was made like a soft sweet woman

D. G. Rossetti; "Eden Bower".

I left father and mother
and for seven years clung to

Lamia

Lilith

a woman averse to being wived

a rival far from a foil

a virago

a viper

a devil's dam

a screech-owl

who scratched my soul with contention and anger

who spiced my food with wormwood

who sank me into the slough of despair and
dissipation.

And yet I am condemned

for putting away Desdemona

a soft sweet woman

and compared to that base Indian

who threw a pearl away

far richer than all his tribe.

MALCOLM X

1

Malcolm!

As an old farm boy you know
chickens always roost at home.

Reagan, sheriff of Wild West show

loaded with guns

too old to duck

is gunned down

in "the land

of the free

and the brave"

in the land

that farms violence.

2

Dead

cant & curs

consider you

no longer dangerous

call you out of name

couple you with

Evers, Kennedy, King
declaring you
deader than Booker T. Washington..

3

Truth angers Man.
You angered America.
"Call me free and accessible,"
commanded America,
"You ain't nothing but
a bitch of a prison
begotten upon violence,"
you countered.

4

You shamed
Kentucky chicken-eating
colored
knee-grow
turn-the-other-cheek
chicken shit
preachers
hawking
peace

in the belly of violence
humility
in Babylon.

5

In your name
black panthers
picked up the gun
offing
piggish
wolfish
ofays.

6

Malcolm!
You ain't dead!
Truth
still hurts the man.
Chickens
still roost at home.
Black children
still murdered
in Atlanta
which ain't too busy to hate

donkeys that farm violence
still harvest violence.

Malcolm!

You ain't dead.

"Every shut-eye ain't sleep,
Every good-bye ain't gone."

TO YOUR ENEMY, GIVE SWEET MILK

1

Spare him whom you want to slay
your anger and black looks.
Bare your fangs in a friendly smile:
never allow the face to steal from the heart.
Spread a feast out for him:
for one that has fed on such a banquet
has already placed his neck on the chopping block.

2

To kill a ninny
to undo a nitwit
to noose a nincompoop
seem what you are not
lest the fool flee in a funk.

3

I thank God that I am not like other men:
many a time have I given the place of honour
to one who wished me ill;
many a time have I killed the fatted calf

for one who is plotting my downfall;
many a time have I regaled one
whom my soul abhors;
many a time have I rejoiced--
watching him writhe in my trap.

After Ugas Nur (Freely translated
from the Somali).

AT THE UNITED NATIONS

You were right, Mr. Adlai Stevenson.

Diplomacy beats donkey-driving
or camel-herding.

All that General Afweyne's diplomats do at the U.N.
besides bray occasionally against South Africa and
Israel

is

drink alcohol

play protocol

act theatrical

try to slim down on Metracal

and cheat on their infibulated clitless wives.

BUSHMAN'S MUSE

Bushman

your muse has two balls and
knee-grow-id middle third leg.

Why you call woman out of name:

uncircumcised bitchwitch

deep ditch

Delilah

devil's dam

Lilith

Lami

screech-owl

adder of problems

substracter of energy

multiplier of enemies and

divider of friendbrothers?

Don't you know

a woman bore you

is born like you and

will bear for you?

SHAKESPEARE, THE BIBLE & BUSHMAN ON WINE

Who hath woe?
 Who hath sor
 row? Who hath
 contentions?
 Who hath bab
 bling? Who ha
 th wounds wi
 thout cause?
 Who hath red
 ness of eyes?

They that tarry
 long at the wine;
 they that go to seek mi

xed wine. Look not thou up
 on the wine when it is red,
 when it giveth his colour in the
 cup, when it moveth itself aright.
 At the last it biteth like a serpent,
 and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes
 shall behold strange women, and thine
 heart shall utter perverse things. Yea,
 thou shalt be as he that lieth down in
 the midst of the sea, or as he that li
 eth upon the top of a mast. They have
 stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was
 not sick; they have beaten me, and I
 felt not; when shall I awake? I will
 seek it yet again. Be not among wine
 bibbers; among riotous eaters of the
 flesh. For the drunkard and the glut
 ton shall come to poverty; and drowsi
 ness shall clothe a man with rags. They
 shall not drink wine with a song; and a
 strong drink shall be bitter to them
 that drink it. There is a crying for
 wine in the streets; all joy is dark
 ened, the mirth of the land is gone.
 Drunk and speak parrot? and squabble?
 swagger? swear? and discourse fustian
 with one's own shadow? O thou invisible
 spirit of wine, if thou hast no name,
 let me call thee devil. Every inordinate
 cup is unblest, and the ingredient is a devil.

CARFAYE

A man without a nickname is like a goat without horns.

(a Somali proverb)

Carfaye: the sweet-smelling one,
fattest Somali in the city of Mogadishu,
city without deodorants.

Everybody knows his nickname and the irony
that sweetens the truth. Nobody knows his real name.

I can see him now in my mind's eye

in the middle of Main Street

in the frying sun

melting away

about to drown in his sweaty khaki uniform

flinging sweat away from his eyes

trying to direct a traffic of stubborn donkeys,

skittish camels (impatient drivers poking their behinds)

hauling grass and milk;

donkey-carts driven by heedless drivers

who claim the city belongs to their tribe and donkeys;

goats, sheep, and cattle on their way to the slaughter-
house;

jay walkers, paraplegic beggars scuttling on all fours

(an American nicknamed them spidermen);

beeping Fiats and thunder-farting ancient trucks
without mufflers.

Out of this medley sometimes a relief would appear:
quivering ripe breasts of a careless bushwoman
or some undulating steatopygous behind
then Carfaye would pause, tilt his head in worshipful
wonder,
flash a smile, and throw darts of desire.

AFWEYNE AND TOGANE

To comprehend the tyranny, the tragedy, and the
baboonery of present day
Africa, it is hard to surpass Shakespeare.

Dr. Said Sheikh Samatar

Sheikhzapoor!

Shakespeare!

You who have heard the tyrant's cruel laughter,
 come to the aid of this unlettered
 spluttering bushman.

Lend thine eloquent tongue to these limping lines.

Why have I fled to cold Canada from such a thing as
 myself?

I was born free as General Afweyne;

so were all the Somalis. In the push

we have all drunk camel's milk and

have endured the hot Somali sun as well as he.

When Egal, our erstwhile Prime Minister,

suspected Afweyne of perfidy, he mustered him
 out of the army to Russia "to study."

Afweyne ran to his influential tribesmen pleading:

"Help me, please! I will freeze in cold Russia.

I am too old and too senile to study anything!"

And this man has now become a god.

Togane, a wretched creature, must now

bend his body if Afweyne carelessly but nod on him;

and Somalis must mark him and copy his speeches in
their books.

He collaborated with Mussolini and his fascist army
when they occupied Somalia. Ye gods, it doth

amaze me that a man so base should get the start
of the majestic world and bear the palm alone.

He doth bestride Somalia like Colossus and

we petty Somalis live from his Mighty Mouth and
look to find ourselves dishonourable graves or exile.

What is in Afweyne that is not in Togane?

Was he not born of a travailing woman as I?

Why should his name be sounded more than mine?

Write them together, mine is as fair a name as his;

sound them, mine doth become the mouth as well;

weigh them, it is as heavy;

conjure with them, "Togane" will start a spirit as
soon as "Afweyne."

Upon what magic camel meat doth our Afweyne feed
that he is grown so great?

On Somali cowardice.

Age, thou art ashamed!

Somalia, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!

BYE-BYE SIR JOHN BARLEYCORN

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn,
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!

Burns: Tam o'Shanter

First time we met
 you were babysitting Mario:
 pumpkin-bellied
 red-eyed as a cannibal.

2

Second time
 you were riding hunger-pinched wet-assed
 Somali Hargeisa bushman
 staggering under you.
 A gang of street arabs stoning him in chorus:
"Umbriacho! Baraculo! Farrobuto! Figlio di cane!"

3

May I ask you, Sir,
 why you ride us natives so hard?
 Why you exact such a staggering price
 from us for enjoying your company?

Is it because we haven't known you long enough?

Because we haven't been out of the bush long enough?

Because you don't agree with our kind?

4

I suppose if Mario and his kind drank

what they weren't wont to:

camel milk or Masai milkshake (cow blood, piss, and
milk mixed)

they too would piss and poop in their pants
in the streets at high noon.

5

In our second meeting

I chose you; you didn't choose me.

When I saw your faithful wet-assed drunken

Somali Hargeisa bushman being stoned for your sake

I didn't say, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

I said "There, for the grace of Sir John Barleycorn,
will I go."

6

We been together for a long time.

I have travelled much in your fabulous frenzied realms

in many varied moods:

the mood jocose
the mood morose
the mood amorous
the mood bellicose
the mood lachrymose
the mood comatose
scorning dangers
risking all for your ephemeral revelations.

7

I have mourned much the drunken bushman within me.
Many a time has he risen
to forswear drunkenness
pledging himself to disciplined dissipation
yet always he returned to you
as a dog returns to his vomit.

8

Bye-Bye, Sir John Barleycorn

I've found

you more totalitarian than General Afweyne
more jealous than God
more murderous than that Jewish kosher cunt

my hand too short to box with you
your price too high: "suicide,
quick or slow, a sudden spill or gradual
oozing away through the years"

in the ubiquitous urinals of civilization.

Without you

I am quiet

as quiet as a child weaned of his mother:

even my soul is a weaned child.

IN PRAISE OF LOVE AND LOOL

Legman

kneeman

neckman

thighman

titsman-

what manner man am I?

I am a bushman

bucked by Lool's buttocks

steatopygous

vibrant

undulant

nostrils flaring in her

pungent

piquant

bushy

uncivilized

undeodorized armpit

fighting floundering furrowing

fuming flailing

gurgling we converged

stuttering in strange tongues.

BUSHMAN, PICK UP THY PEN

"It (writing) is hell. It takes it all out of you.
It nearly kills you; but you can do it - anybody can."

Ernest Hemingway

Yes, writing is hell,
especially if you are a bushman.
Every time I try to write
either Sir John Barleycorn beckons
or I get a peremptory knee-grow-id
hard-on.

No, I don't want to write.

I can't write.

How can I write

of life's song

its sorrow

its beauty

its beastliness

its passion

its vanity

in the language of an alien tribe?

But I can talk.

My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

Oh that these words were

now written!

Oh that they were printed in a book!

I have wanted to write ever since
mother celebrated me
because I smattered in missionary's language:

"All those who used to pen books
are in panic now because of bushman."

That was donkey years ago.

Indolence and cowardice

proved meaner than General Afweyne

than Sir John Barleycorn

than any bitchwitch!

Bushman, pick up thy pen!